DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 175 273 FL 010 556

AUTHOR Winokur, Marshall
TITLE How to Arrange Student Tours to the Soviet Union.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 30p.; Expanded version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages (New York, December 27, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Leaders; *College Students; Cultural Enrichment; *Culture Contact; Foreign Countries; Foreign Culture; *Group Activities; Higher Education; *Instructional Trips; Language Instruction; *Leaders Guides; Leadership Responsibility; *Russian; Second Language Learning; Tourism; *Travel
IDENTIFIERS *USSR

ABSTRACT

The details of planning a student tour to the Soviet Union are described by an experienced tour organizer. Student tours of one to three weeks are presented as rewarding alternatives to lengthy overseas study. Recommendations are made regarding choice of tour type, length of tour, travel agencies, time of year to travel, advertising a tour, orienting students, size and composition of tour group, itineraries and guide books, and dealing with problems inside the Soviet Union. The hard work and long hours involved in organizing a tour are emphasized, but the rewards are seen to include the opportunity to introduce students to the use of Russian outside the classroom and the opportunity for the teacher to improve his own skills. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marshall Winokur
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Copyright 1979 Marshall Winokur

ED175273

Marshall Winokur
The University of Alabama
Department of German and Russian
Box 1987
University, Al. 35486

How to Arrange Student Tours to the Soviet Union[1]

The first question that comes to mind is why go to the trouble of arranging a student tour to the Soviet Union when students can travel to Russia on the CIEE, SUNY Albany, or Ohio State-Purdue Russian Language Programs. There are several reasons: (1) These programs are highly structured academic programs limited to good students who have had three years of college Russian. (2) Students live in one city, either Moscow or Leningrad, with tours of other Soviet cities generally reserved for the end of their stay. (3) The academic programs are long, ranging from eight weeks to a semester. (4) Lastly, they are all rather expensive.

Student tours, on the other hand, are a refreshing alternative to the overseas classroom experience. The individual is exposed in a less formal, more leisurely way, to Soviet

FL010556

[1]This is an expanded and revised version of a paper I delivered at the annual AATSEEL meeting in New York on December 27, 1978. Although I have conducted three student tours to the Soviet Union and have been there on several other occasions under the auspices of IREX, I felt that an article of this scope needed additional input from members of the Slavic profession who regularly conduct student tours to the Soviet Union. I wish to thank Jane Barley, Zita Dabars, Hugh Ragsdale, Canfield Smith, and Henry Urbanski for their excellent comments and suggestions, many of which have been incorporated into this article.

life, people and institutions. Student tours can be open to all students and adults, regardless of previous Russian language training. Both the itinerary and dates are flexible. The range of cities and sight-seeing trips which can be scheduled is enormous. The tours are generally for shorter periods of time, and therefore cost considerably less than the language programs. They can be arranged so as not to interfere with summer plans. Student tours may complement the formal language programs abroad mentioned above inasmuch as first- and second-year Russian students often whet their appetites for advanced language study in the Soviet Union.

What is involved in organizing a student tour to the Soviet Union? First and foremost the task requires an endless capacity for work. A leader must be prepared to conduct a lengthy correspondence with an American travel agency concerning itinerary, costs, and conditions of the tour; do extensive advertising to attract prospective students; collect large sums of money; secure passports and visas for the group; draw up an information booklet for the participants; make frequent telephone calls to group members; and hold several orientation meetings and lectures on contemporary Soviet life. The tour leader must also be blessed with the ability to persevere in the face of overwhelming odds and have a good sense of humor. The former will assist him in his dealings with Soviet guides and tourist agencies once he reaches the Motherland. The latter he will need for countless inane questions, petty complaints,

and daily problems that are an integral part of any tour abroad. He must be especially responsive and attentive to tour members' needs and problems once inside Russia. And finally, the tour leader needs plenty of time to plan and organize a successful tour to the Soviet Union. I usually begin seven months before the actual departure date.

Two other ingredients are essential to organizing a tour to Russia: (1) a student body where a substantial number of students have financial resources on which to draw; and (2) an interest or curiosity in overseas travel among the students. The latter can be generated; the former cannot. The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa is not exactly a hotbed of Slavic studies in the United States, yet I have led three groups of students to the Soviet Union since 1973 and my colleague in the History Department has conducted the same number in alternate years. In 1973 I had fifteen participants, but in 1976 and 1978 I had thirty participants in each group. With few exceptions, the students' parents paid for the tour.

Types and Cost of Tours

A tour leader has a number of options to choose from in regard to the type of tour he wishes to conduct to the Soviet Union. The simplest tour, from the standpoint of a leader, is that in which he has very little to do. A local travel agency, for example, might ask a Russian teacher to lead a group of

adults and students to the U.S.S.R. The agency would supply the adults, while the teacher would be expected to provide the students. The agency handles all the time-consuming chores like collecting the money, handling passports and visas for the group, and passing out information on the Soviet Union to the participants. The tour leader is then expected to look out for the participants' interests once the group is inside the Soviet Union. It should also be noted that in some of the larger cities across the U.S., there are sponsoring organizations such as Promoting Enduring Peace (PEP), which will handle the routine chores as well as publicity for a fee. Assistance in publicizing the tour is especially important if the group is to consist of participants from a large geographical area. In any case, it behooves the tour director to find out how much this service will add to the total cost of the tour, since it may be prohibitively expensive.

Generally, the first step is deciding on the length of the tour. Many travel agencies offer a variety of tours to the Soviet Union ranging in length from one to three weeks with one-week tours being the most popular.

Typically, the one-week tour includes only Moscow and Leningrad, which are the two most important cities in the Soviet Union, but are no more typical of the U.S.S.R. than are New York and Boston of the United States. These trips are difficult on the person's body clock with time changes of at least sixteen hours in seven days. It also seems to me that if one is going

to make an eleven-hour plane trip to a country as large, important, and far away as the Soviet Union, that it deserves more than a week's visit. Ultimately, of course, the length of a tour is often determined by price. A one-week tour of Russia is better than no tour at all.

Adult groups prefer two-week tours for these reasons: (1) two weeks fit into a vacation period very well. (2) Adults need not exhaust an entire year's leave on the trip. (3) Grown-ups are reluctant or unable to be away from home longer than two weeks.

I prefer three-week student tours for the following reasons: (1) a three-week tour provides sufficient time to visit contrasting geographical areas of the Soviet Union, thus giving students a better idea of its vastness, different climactic zones, varying terrain, diverse people and their cultures. (2) A tour lasting at least 22 days and no more than 45 entitles a group to the special APEX fare. The cost of flying to and from the Soviet Union often accounts for a significant portion of the tour price. (3) Three-week tours can cost as little as one-and-a-half times the price of one-week tours.

I do not recommend tours of more than three weeks for many reasons. Tourists reach a saturation point in sightseeing. After the tenth museum and eleventh palace, students swear never again to set foot in a museum or palace. Soviet cities, curiously enough, all begin to look alike. The fast pace of a Soviet tour, the tasteless food, and mediocre accommodations

begin to take their toll on the once-energetic participants. During the third week a number of individuals begin to miss tours, spend their evenings in their rooms, and experience homesickness. By this time, if not sooner, people who did not get along with each other in the beginning of the tour, are at each other's throats. And perhaps, most important of all, you, the tour director, are tired of fighting with the Soviet bureaucracy over changes in the itinerary and of playing nursemaid to "grown-up" students.

In addition to deciding how long the tour should be, one must also decide between a packaged tour and one where the tour director selects the itinerary. There is one distinct advantage to packaged tours, and that is relative price stability. Once the Soviets have agreed to a price, they generally abide by it. In 1976 when I arranged the complete itinerary myself, the price increased twice. In 1978 while the dollar plummeted against major European currencies and the Russian ruble, our packaged-tour price remained the same. Price stability is an important consideration in this day and age.

If the group can only afford a week in the Soviet Union, the packaged tours of General Tours of New York City or Liberty Travel of Watchung, New Jersey may be adequate. In 1978 they offered all-inclusive, nine-day trips with first-class accommodations to Moscow, Novgorod, and Leningrad from $559 to $649, an excellent price. These two travel agencies charter planes to Russia. They deal in quantity, not quality, hence the low

overhead. But a one-week tour is rushed and impersonal. Buses are filled to capacity. One Soviet guide is assigned to every fifty people. Unless tourists are right up front next to the guide, they will not only miss her commentary, but in all probability fail to see whatever she is describing. On several of my tours, individuals from General Tours have begged to join my groups in Moscow and Leningrad.

My own experience with different travel agencies is limited to two. One has since gone out of business; the other, Academic Travel Abroad of Washington, D.C., has been designing educational tours to the Soviet Union for high schools, universities, museums, and professional organizations for the past three decades. Its programs are diverse, individualized, and of high quality. The prices are competitive and the staff members are professional. They provide, free of charge, an excellent guidebook to the Soviet Union for each member of the group, good notes on how to prepare for the trip and what to expect once the group is over there, and a tour director's manual for travel to the Soviet Union. In addition, they offer an occasional scholarship which covers the cost of the Russian trip to a qualified member of the group. My only complaint, which is probably the fault of an inefficient Soviet bureaucracy rather than ATA's, is that I have had to do battle, sometimes fierce, with local Intourist or Sputnik officials in many Soviet cities over radical changes in our itinerary. An extreme example of this occurred on my 1978 tour while we were visiting Alma-Ata.

The local officials claimed that they had not received our itinerary from Sputnik headquarters in Moscow, and so they presented us with their own dull propagandistic program. With the assistance of my Soviet guide, I was able to reinstate most of my original schedule.

Other travel agencies which handle student tours include Anniversary Tours of New York City, Citizen Exchange Corps of New York City, Festival Tours (formerly American Travel Association) of Washington, D.C., and Inter-Collegiate Holidays of New York City. Citizen Exchange Corps is well-equipped to handle specialized field trips, joint conferences, professional discourse, and traveling seminars to the Soviet Union. In the past CEC has arranged special travel programs for art societies, bar associations, college choruses, conservationists, mountain clubs, ski clubs, writers, and so on. This past year CEC offered two exotic tours: a cruise down the Volga and skiing in the Caucasus. In selecting a travel agent it is best to ask a colleague who has had experience with a particular firm. One question that should be asked is what is the reimbursement record for the travel agency in instances where individuals withdraw or the tour has to be cancelled or modified.

Another choice that need be made by the leader is whether to travel with Intourist or Sputnik, the only two Soviet travel agencies. (A third organization deals only with trade unions.) In any case, one does not deal directly with Intourist or Sputnik in the United States. The leader makes his wishes

known to the travel agent who in turn confirms the cost, itinerary, and terms of the tour with the Soviets.

Intourist provides two classes of service--first class and semi-deluxe. Sputnik is designed for students, although it does not necessarily meet the expectations of American students. The difference in price and comfort between the two is considerable. The price differential between Intourist (first class) and Sputnik for my 1978 three-week tour to Moscow, Leningrad, and Central Asia was $700. I therefore selected Sputnik. Intourist accommodations with no more than two to a room, private bath or shower, hotels centrally located, three good meals a day, good circus and theater seats, and porterage are far superior to Sputnik's shabbier accommodations, with two to five per room, communal toilet, one bath or shower per floor, questionnable sanitary conditions, hotels often on the outskirts of a large city, poor food, and no porterage. Sputnik places a limit on the number of adults one may include in a group; Intourist does not.

Intourist menus offer a selection of dishes for every meal. (The tour director would be well advised to volunteer to assist the Soviet guide in the choice of food for the group, since he is more familiar with American tastes than his Soviet counterpart.) In addition, dessert and an assortment of beverages accompany lunches and suppers. Sputnik offers neither desserts nor a selection of drinks. Unlike Intourist hotels many Sputnik facilities have become gathering points for blackmarketeers.

Their aggressiveness, such as physically assaulting students or bursting into their rooms, has reached epidemic proportions. For many students the temptation to do business with these unsavory characters is hard to resist. Finally, as the tour leader of a group traveling Sputnik class, one soon realizes that he has no clout with Soviet personnel who provide services for first-class tourists. For example, it is nearly impossible to obtain ballet tickets or make reservations for the group at a reputable Moscow restaurant.

Intourist and Sputnik excursions to museums, palaces, monasteries, educational institutions, collective farms, monuments, and so on, also differ in several respects: (1) a Sputnik guide who speaks both English and Russian is assigned to the group for the duration of its stay in the Soviet Union. However, local guides do not always know English. This means a running translation must be provided. For those students who are studying Russian the practice is useful. For those who are not, it is a waste of time, and boring as well. (2) Buses assigned to Sputnik tours are seldom the spacious, comfortable Hungarian-made Ikarus buses Intourist often uses. More often than not they are decrepit, run-down Soviet products with foul-smelling gases permeating the interior. Frequently, they are too small for both passengers and luggage when traveling to and from the airport.

The only advantage Sputnik tours have over those run by Intourist is the opportunity to meet young Russians on a regular

basis. This occurs informally at the hotels and also at the more formal Komsomol gatherings in the evenings. Even at pre-arranged Komsomol meetings, American students seem to enjoy the dancing and conversations at the tables where food and drink flow freely. In contrast to this, Intourist hotels do not house Russian students. Student meetings arranged by Intourist are often stiff, formal affairs held in the House of Friendship. There "students," sometimes forty years of age, present indoctrinated views on the United States and the state of Soviet-American relations. People do not normally make friends at the House of Friendship. Sputnik guides are generally younger, more in tune with the students than Intourist people.

If money is not a factor, the choice between traveling Intourist or Sputnik is easy. Perhaps one can rationalize the Sputnik experience in this way: It is only for three weeks and students can put up with anything. They will come home more appreciative of their life style in the U.S. On the other hand, is it necessary to spend close to $1250 (the approximate cost of my last Sputnik tour) to gain an appreciation of the United States?

Recently Intourist introduced a new "student rate" for groups of 20-25 persons, age 26 or less. Students are housed in first-class hotels located away from the center of town. (The down-town hotels are reserved for visitors who pay regular Intourist rates.) Otherwise accommodations and services are those normally offered by Intourist. The student rate is approximately one-half

that of the regular Intourist rate, or slightly more than Sputnik's. This may well be the ideal choice.

The Seasons: Which One Is Best?

The U.S.S.R. is a northern country with over three-fourths of its vast land mass located further north than the city of Quebec. It has a continental climate with extreme temperature variations. In May 1978 in Leningrad, for example, we experienced bitter cold conditions for springtime with the wind-chill factor reducing the temperature to zero degrees Fahrenheit. My students adapted to the situation by wearing several layers of socks on their hands as they toured the city! One week later when we reached Bukhara in Uzbekistan, the thermometer soared to 100°F. Since neither shade nor potable tap water was available in this Central Asian city, a few students suffered heat exhaustion.

Choosing a suitable time of year to travel to Russia is contingent upon a number of factors: (1) length and cost of tour, (2) the best time of year for the greatest number of students to participate, (3) climate considerations, and (4) the tour leader's personal plans. The most comfortable season to visit Moscow and cities north of the capital is in the summer. The pleasant temperatures enable visitors to do a good deal more sightseeing and exploring at this time of year when the average day has twenty or more hours of daylight. On the other hand, summer is also the most crowded and most expensive

season to tour the Soviet Union. Peak season runs from June 1 to September 30. Tourist services are often overtaxed, causing delays, rescheduling of activities, and short tempers. One should avoid traveling further south than Kiev except to the Black Sea coast. Both high temperatures and humidities prevail in much of the south, and the hotels have no air-conditioning.

Winter travel has some advantages over summer: (1) The countryside, churches, and monasteries, clothed in a white mantel of snow, are enchanting and uniquely Russian. (2) There are fewer tourists and the cost of the tour is lower. (3) Moscow offers first-rate theater. (In the summer the best theaters are either closed or the regular artists are away on tour.) Disadvantages include intense cold, high winds, and snow storms which, along with heavy winter clothing, restrict physical movement about the cities. One has no desire to explore the streets of Moscow or Leningrad, for example, when the temperature drops to -20°F. and the wind is howling.

As for autumn and spring, both tend to be cold with alternating periods of frost and thaw. Rain and mud in spring can make travel difficult and unpleasant. Like winter, both autumn and spring offer substantial tour savings over summer rates.

Advertising--the Key to Success

Once the dates and itinerary have been selected the next step is to identify those segments of the population one wishes to attract to the Russian tour. They may either be local residents

or residents of different geographical areas. My participants are local--approximately 85% students and 15% adults. A drawing card for both students and their parents, who often foot the bill, is the granting of academic credit for participation. My three-credit culture course, "Study Tour of the Soviet Union," is offered during the University of Alabama's spring interim, the last three weeks of May.[2]

With few exceptions, the adults on my tours have either been faculty members, staff, or alumni. Therefore, I direct nearly my entire advertising campaign to the University of Alabama campus. The most effective forms of advertising include: (1) personal appearances of the tour director in Russian language, literature, history, political science, and geography classes; (2) ads in student newspapers; (3) posters strategically placed on campus; (4) window displays of artwork and Soviet crafts in the student union or main library; and (5) word-of-mouth. Although I have utilized TV in the past, I now restrict my advertising to student newspapers and the radio. Since radio stations are required to make short public service announcements, four local stations agreed to make short announcements about the trip several times a day for a month. I have also been interviewed by the local student radio station.

[2]Requirements for this course involve the completion of a short term paper written in English after the conclusion of the tour. The students may choose from subjects in the fields of art and architecture, education, minority groups, and life styles. The papers are the products of student observations and impressions, Soviet lectures and conversations with Russians, campus lectures, and selected readings.

Nothing, however, can replace the tour leader's powers of persuasion in the classroom in promoting a trip to the Soviet Union. His own students, who are a captive audience, should be a prime target. A tour leader can excite his students' curiosity about the upcoming tour on a daily basis with information on some "unique" feature of the itinerary. A tour director who does his job properly should be able to attract at least 50% of his group from among the Russian language students. Students who have signed up for the tour, or are leaning towards it, are usually willing to talk it up among their friends. I am always amazed at the number of people who join my tours as a result of this kind of publicity.

Anyone who expresses an interest in the tour receives a two-page description of the highlights and essential tour information such as cost, dates, and conditions. One of my recent handouts began like this:

> The Russian Department at the University of Alabama is offering a once-in-a-lifetime travel adventure to a country so vast that the sun never sets. This trip to the U.S.S.R. is designed to provide an unusual glimpse of Soviet life, people, and land in two distinctly different regions--European Russia and Central Asia. Feast your eyes on the golden cupolas of the Moscow churches and the blue-tiled domes of the mosques in Samarkand. Visit the complex yet fascinating world of the largest country on earth--the Soviet Union.

Since students enjoy reading campus newspapers, my two-page handout appeared in abbreviated form in the major student paper. Thereafter, I sent in short blurbs to the newspaper reminding the students of the tour and the deadline for signing up. I also

put up a large number of eye-catching posters in strategic spots on campus, e.g., in glass display cases where they cannot be torn down. The theme of my last poster, advertising a trip to European Russia (Moscow, Zagorsk, Leningrad) and Central Asia (Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Alma-Ata), was "Visit Russia--Where West Meets East." A detailed pen drawing of St. Basil's and one of a madrasah (Islamic seminary) dominated the poster. This theme was carried over to an impressive window display which I set up in the main library. In it two colorful figures several feet high, a Russian Cossack and an Oriental dancer, stood on either side of a map of the Soviet Union drawn for the occasion. The map was marked with only those cities we planned to visit. Color postcards and calendar pictures of museums, palaces, fortresses, subways, churches, mosques, madrasahs, and mountain scenery of the six cities as well as pictures of smiling Soviet citizens were placed below and to the sides of the map and the two figures. The display case floor contained an assortment of matryoshki, Dymkovo clay toys, Palekh boxes, Khokhloma bowls and utensils, and wooden bears. Displays of an upcoming trip to Russia can attract a good deal of attention if they are done cleverly and artistically. For the posters and displays I draw on students who are talented artists to assist me with the artwork, design, and layout.

Timing, of course, is another important consideration. When I organize a tour to the U.S.S.R. for the month of May, I gear my advertising blitz for November and December, i.e., before

and after the Thanksgiving holidays and before the Christmas recess. This interval gives students time to think about the trip, talk it over with their parents, and it also gives me a jump on the competition. Professors conducting tours to Europe and Central America during our spring interim usually wait until mid-January to advertise them.

Meetings with Students

I collect a deposit of $100 from each participant upon his enrollment in the tour and have him sign a release absolving me of responsibility for acts, omissions, and events during the trip which are beyond my control. I arrange three to four meetings with students prior to the tour of the Soviet Union. The first two meetings always coincide with due dates for trip payments, and at that time I distribute written instructions on how to procure passport pictures, passports, and visas. At these meetings I pass out detailed printed information on a wide range of topics: (1) the costs and conditions of the tour; (2) itinerary; (3) expected weather conditions; (4) hotel accommodations and rooming assignments; (5) electric current; (6) baggage, clothing, footwear, laundry, and packing; (7) food and water problems; (8) American snacks; (9) medicine, toilet articles, Soviet hospitals, how to stay healthy; (10) Soviet mail, telegraph, telephone, and public transportation services; (11) camera, film, and photography; (12) Soviet and American

currency; (13) shopping for souvenirs; (14) gift ideas for Russians; (15) safety precautions and travel insurance; (16) how to fill out a Soviet customs declaration; (17) a special nel'zja "no-no" list; (18) guidebooks on the Soviet Union; (19) religious services in Moscow and Leningrad; and (20) the importance of maintaining a positive attitude while traveling through the Soviet Union. Actually, a good travel agency should cover many of these points in its own literature for the group. I also answer questions on Russia and deliver several short lectures on particular aspects of the country. In addition I show participants slides of the Soviet Union as a sort of preview of coming attractions. Students also have an opportunity to see films on most of the places they will visit, which I schedule during regular language classes. (The National Council of American Soviet Friendship in New York City has fairly good inexpensive films for rent on the cities and peoples of the Soviet Union.)

Tour Group Composition

The ideal size for a tour group is 20. This number permits up to five withdrawals without substantially increasing the cost for other members of the group. Generally speaking, the larger the group, the more work, responsibility, and potential problems for the tour director. If a tour leader can persuade a dependable adult or even a reliable student to assist in the preparation

and conducting of the tour in return for a partially or fully paid trip, the job will be much easier.

Student tour leaders are seldom in the enviable position of being able to choose participants for their groups. Most are anxious to sign up any student who can afford the cost of the trip. The Soviet travel agencies, Sputnik and Intourist, generally quote tour rates on the basis of fifteen paying members. The sixteenth person, the tour leader, is entitled to a free trip. Actually, a tour can be geared to any number of individuals, with the cost increasing as the number of participants decreases.

In these days of spiraling inflation, attracting enough students to a tour of the Soviet Union can be a formidable task. So one naturally turns to the non-student adult population for additional recruits. I recommend that caution be exercised when including adults in a student tour. For example, on my 1976 tour, a woman in her sixties fussed and fumed every morning at breakfast because the Russians refused to serve her coffee with her meal. She also packed suitcases the size of steamer trunks after I had repeatedly told the group to pack lightly, and then she expected the students to tote her luggage from place to place! She lost no time in antagonizing the group with her endless list of complaints, and as a result, became the object of a good deal of ridicule. Another person signed up for the tour and only later told me that he was a diabetic and required a special diet as well as a private room. I informed

him that the Soviets would not be able to comply with his requests and promptly returned his check. He was under the impression that travel to Russia was no different from travel to Western Europe. Unhappy with this turn of events, he accused me of being prejudiced against old people, diabetics, and Jews, and threatened to take me to court.

It must be said that students can be just as difficult to deal with as their elders. During my 1978 tour, the five adults who accompanied me to Soviet Central Asia where food and accommodations were the worst I have ever experienced in six trips to the Soviet Union, behaved in an exemplary manner, while many of the students did not. It is important to get to know both the adults and the students before traveling with them to the Soviet Union. Pre-tour counseling can eliminate many problems. One recalcitrant individual can jeopardize the safety and well-being of the group to say nothing of spoiling their enjoyment. For example, one of the first students to sign up for my spring '78 tour to Soviet Central Asia confided to me that she had some rare disease accompanied by black-out spells, and that she planned to leave the tour group in Central Asia to take a train to Siberia. I consulted our legal counsel at the University to get his opinion on the matter. He urged me to exclude her from the group on the basis of this information. I informed the student in writing of my decision, which she immediately challenged. In an attempt to reverse my decision, she wrote me a letter in which she promised to submit to a

medical examination and comply with the purposes of the tour. Although the physician's initial tests failed to reveal anything unusual, they were not conclusive. Ultimately, the doctor refused to give her a clean bill of health because she withheld pertinent information about her mysterious disease. Consequently, I denied her permission to join the tour.

It is imperative that group members be in excellent health for several reasons: (1) A trip to the Soviet Union is very strenuous (numerous time zone changes, great distances, the body is constantly on the go, different foods), and (2) one should avoid, if at all possible, any medical treatment in a Soviet hospital. Conditions and facilities are vastly inferior to those in the United States. The patient is not only held incommunicado in a hospital ward, but unless a tour director is firm with the authorities, he will remain there after a group has departed for America! Unfortunately, leaders cannot require medical examinations for prospective participants. They must rely on their own judgment and the honesty of the participants in matters of health.

Even with a healthy group of individuals there is no way of predicting how a group of relative strangers will act under adverse conditions in the Soviet Union. Groups tend to be either problem-free or problem-laden. The stress and strain of a tour through Russia somehow manages to bring out the worst in some people. Minor irritations such as cold water for washing in the morning and hotdogs,

cabbage, and peas for breakfast three days in a row are forever cropping up. In dealing with these situations light-hearted comments during the trip such as "People who bathe in cold water live longer," and "Oh boy, my favorite breakfast again," are good for the group's morale. The group leader must be prepared ahead of time to handle gripes and outbursts of temper, and encourage participants to accept everything as part of the Soviet experience.

Suggested Itinerary and Guidebooks

If a tour director decides to work up his own itinerary for a three-week tour of the Soviet Union, it is better to schedule fewer cities and spend more time in each place. It is very tempting to schedule as much as possible, rationalizing that most of the students will not be back to the Soviet Union. But a steady diet of travel on Aeroflot, trains, and buses quickly saps one's energies. I once made the mistake of racing through seven Soviet republics and 12 cities in 21 days, which brings to mind the view of American travel habits in the film, If It's Tuesday, It Must Be Belgium, except for us it was Georgia. It is a good idea to include several completely free afternoons in different cities.

Another possibility is stopping for a day in a West Eurpppan capital, such as Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, or Helsinki, before continuing on to the U.S.S.R. This gives everyone a chance to recover from the effects of jet lag, and is definitely an added attraction for students who will see "something" of Europe. The additional cost, if any, is minimal.

Students who fly directly from New York to Moscow are usually on the verge of collapse by the time they arrive.

An ideal three-week tour, especially for late spring, summer, and early fall, might include the following cities or areas visited in this order: (1) Moscow; (2) one or two medieval Russian cities on the Golden Circle such as Zagorsk, Pereslavl'-Zalessky, Rostov Veliky, Jaroslavl', Vladimir', or Suzdal'; (3) Leningrad; (4) Tbilisi; and (5) a city or resort area on the Black Sea such as Sochi, Yalta, or Odessa. It is extremely important to begin the tour in Moscow. All major decisions concerning changes in the itinerary are made there. Last May we landed in Leningrad and I was never able to reinstate certain items omitted from our tour. No one in Leningrad would or could take the responsibility. The visit to the Black Sea area should have few scheduled excursions, and should come near the end of the tour. Students can recuperate there by relaxing on the beach and swimming. Then the group must return to Moscow for a day to conclude its tour of Russia. This itinerary, unlike some I have been on, avoids the wasteful doubling back and forth to Moscow to get to other Soviet cities.

As for what to do and see in these places, American tour operators and guidebooks offer numerous suggestions. Draw on your own experience or on someone else's if you have not been to the Soviet Union. In addition to the usual sightseeing, every student tour should include one or two meetings with

Soviet students and visits to a ten-year school, Moscow State University, a circus performance, a ballet performance, and perhaps a collective farm. One should also try to arrange travel inside Russia so that it includes a variety of means of transportation such as planes, overnight trains, buses, motorboats, and hydrofoils. Students are fascinated by overnight train trips and hydrofoil rides.

The tour director should have at least one good guidebook on the Soviet Union in his personal library. All of the following works are acceptable. (1) Nagel's Encyclopedia-Guide: U.S.S.R. (Geneva: Nagel Publishers, 1974[4]), a modern, expensive "Baedeker," is unquestionably the best detailed guide available today. Karl Baedeker's Handbook for Travelers: Russia (1914; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1970), a guidebook connosieur's delight, contains a wealth of information about pre-Revolutionary Russia--much of which is still valid today. Nevertheless, it lacks current information on Soviet Russia and should therefore be used in conjunction with a recent tour guide. (2) Robert Fisher's Fodor's Soviet Union 1978 (New York: David McKay Co., 1977), Jeffrey and Eugenie Gross' The Soviet Union: A Guide for Travelers (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), and Victor and Jennifer Louis' The Complete Guide to the Soviet Union (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978) are good basic guidebooks. Charles Ward's Next Time You Go to Russia (Washington, D.C.: Academic Travel Books, 1977) is an excellent work, but only describes fifteen cities. Finally, John Felber's The American's

Tourist Manual for the U.S.S.R. (Newark: International Intertrade Index, 1976), a pocket-guide, is rather limited on details.

Problems Inside Russia

This topic is so vast that it is properly the subject of another paper. The most serious problems a tour director faces are those in which the Soviets deliberately tamper with a previously agreed upon, prepaid program. Both Intourist and Sputnik officials are no doubt following orders when they substitute Soviet propaganda for certain items in a group's itinerary. Once in the Soviet Union, a tour leader's only recourse is his own ingenuity and negotiating ability. One must act firmly and forcefully with those in charge. In general, the Russian guide assigned to the group for the duration of its stay in the Soviet Union will do her utmost to rectify problems. Occasionally, however, even her efforts are not enough. For example, on my 1976 trip, the Intourist head in Riga refused to accept any part of our pre-arranged program. Instead she was determined to subject us to her own unimaginative, propaganda-laden agenda. To win converts to her cause she lied repeatedly to the group about our day-to-day activities. For example, she promised to do one thing, but did another, and tried to sow dissension in my group by slandering me behind my back and threatening me with the prospect of not being able to return to Russia unless we "cooperated." The group received a frightening lesson in totalitarian rule. (Fortunately, this

individual has no control over who does or does not enter the Soviet Union.) Should such an extreme situation arise, it is best to inform the authorities that the group has no intention of participating in a program it did not pay for. In the past, group leaders had some leverage with the local Intourist or Sputnik representatives in terms of their pre-paid program because they were issued white vouchers, which they turned over to the Soviets after agreement had been reached on the group's itinerary in a particular city. Unfortunately, these vouchers no longer carry much weight in such discussions.

Often the local Intourist or Sputnik representative will claim that he received no instructions from the home office in Moscow concerning a group's program. The logical solution is to aim for some sort of compromise. Excuses such as "we received your request too late to act on it," or a palace tour "has been overbooked," or a museum is "closed for repairs," may or may not be true. The tour leader has no way of checking the accuracy of these statements. The name of the game is finding an acceptable substitute. If this is impossible, I suggest canceling the unacceptable portions of the Soviet's program and giving the group free time. If the American tour guide is well briefed on each city, or has a good handbook, then he can act as a guide for certain sights.

A more difficult problem to solve because of the logistics involved concerns the allocation of days in various cities. Last year we had scheduled four days in Moscow. Upon arrival

in Leningrad, we learned this visit had been reduced to three days. No explanation was given. Our permanent Russian guide and I phoned Moscow from Leningrad, Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Alma-Ata in an attempt to lengthen our stay in Moscow and shorten it in Alma-Ata. The Moscow affair became a standing joke among the students who had all but written off any visit to the Soviet capital. And indeed, one student dreamt that she spent a total of 25 minutes in Moscow! We managed, finally, to restore the day to Moscow. To avoid this kind of situation always begin the tour in Moscow, where problems of this nature and others can be solved immediately at either Intourist or Sputnik headquarters.

Other tour-connected problems include: (1) romances between members of the group and with Russians; (2) illnesses resulting from indigestible or poor quality food and impotable water (the infamous parasite, giardia lamblia, in the Leningrad water regularly strikes certain group members); (3) hotel accommodations with cold water, plugged toilets, and unsanitary conditions; (4) students' stealing, misusing, and breaking objects in hotel rooms; (5) bribery: giving away gum, ball-point pens, cigarettes, or pins to hotel maids and floor attendants, or buying liquor at a Beryozka for an "administrator" in exchange for certain services or favors, which the group has already paid for; (6) black marketeering: the sale of blue jeans, shirts, coats, Army clothing, records and Western literature to Russians, and the buying of icons and other religious

objects from them; (7) transporting illegal merchandise through Soviet customs (coming and going); (8) currency violations: the illegal exchange of rubles for dollars with the Soviets; (9) transportation mix-ups: students missing buses or trains, or the group being bumped from scheduled flights; (10) refusal of members of the group to participate in scheduled excursions; and (11) tours with unenthusiastic local guides.

Conclusion

I recommend a three-week tour to the Soviet Union with a reputable agency skilled in designing educational tours and experienced in dealing with the Soviets. Tours which allow the director input in the itinerary are preferable to pre-packaged tours that do not. Ultimately a successful trip to the Soviet Union reflects the director's imagination, initiative, and expertise.

Finally, despite all of the work and frustrations a tour director inevitably encounters along the way, a tour to the Soviet Union has its rewards. For those students who have only seen textbook Russian, a trip to the Soviet Union will be the highpoint of their language study. An abstraction finally becomes a reality; they hear Russians communicating in Russian, and they are surrounded by signs of every description and size in the Cyrillic alphabet. Red Square is more beautiful than they had imagined; the Hermitage more sumptuous.

For the leader there are benefits as well. A foreign language cannot be taught without frequent reference to the people and country in which the language is spoken. In order to keep abreast of the many changes in language, culture, political and technological development of a foreign land, a teacher must regularly spend time in that country. Unless he is fortunate enough to win IREX awards or be the resident director of one of the established language programs in Leningrad or Moscow on a regular basis, there is no other way to have frequent contact with the Soviet Union. A tour enhances one's skills as a teacher of Russian. It gives the instructor an opportunity to convey to his classes first-hand impressions of the Soviet Union and its peoples. By relating his own experiences and challenges in Russia, he may be able to inspire in his students a greater interest in studying Russian and visiting the Soviet Union at a future date--with him. And if we are honest about it--a trip to the Soviet Union is just as exciting for us as it is for our students, no matter how often we have been there. Счастливого пути "bon voyage"!